

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4189

S E C R E T BANGKOK 9659

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, EGEN, CB, TH

SUBJECT: THAI RICE FOR CAMBODIA

1. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF CALL ON UNDERSECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHARUNPHAN JUNE 21 TO URGE THAT RTG MEET REQUEST BY CAMBODIAN DELEGATION (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS NOW IN TOWN) FOR IMMEDIATE ADDITIONAL 10,000 TONS OF THAI RICE. CHARUNPHAN WILL FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN THAI DECISION- MAKING PROCESS AND IT SEEMED TO ME DESIRABLE TO REITERATE OUR INTEREST IN THAILAND SELLING ADDITIONAL RICE TO CAMBODIA AT OUTSET OF TALKS TO REDUCE RISK THAT RTG MIGHT TAKE NEGATIVE STAND FROM WHICH THEY WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RETREAT.

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH CHARUNPHAN I MENTIONED IDFFICULT MILITARY SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, PARTICULARLY EFFECT FREQUENT INTERDICTION OF ROUTES 4 AND 5 AND HARASSMENT OF MEKING TRAFFIC HAS ON SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS TO CAPITAL. RICE IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE COMMODITY, AND RICE CRISIS WOULD AGGRAVATE ALREADY CONTINUING POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND JEOPARDIZE STABILITY OF NEW POLITICAL COUNCIL. I STRESSED OUR JOINT INTEREST IN PREVENTING THIS FROM HAPPENING AND DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO BRING ABOUT STABLE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO SECURITY OF THAILAND.

3. CHARUNPHAN EXPRESSED AWARENESS OF CAMBODIAN SITUATION BUT NOTED THAT THAILAND ALSO FACES DIFFICULT PROBLEMS WITH
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REGARD TO RICE. DOMESTIC PRICES ARE RISING DRAMATICALLY, POPULAR DISSATISFACTION IS GROWING AND HERE ALSO THERE COULD BE CRISIS SITUATION WHICH WOULD UNDERMINE STABILITY OF SEA IF ADEQUATE RICE SUPPLIES ARE NOT ASSURED FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION. CHARUNPHAN SAID HE DID HOWEVER BELIEVE THAT RTG WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP CAMBODIA BY RICE SALES " LATE NEXT MONTH" AFTER NEXT CROP IS HARVESTED. I STRESSED THAT NEED IS IMMEDIATE; THAT RICE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA IS DETERIORATING RAPIDLY, WITH LESS THAN TWO WEEKS SUPPLY NOW ON HAND IN PHNOM PENH. NEED FOR ADDITIONAL 10,000 TONS IS URGENT AND MUST BE MET NOW IF INTERESTS OF ALL OF US ARE TO BE PROTECTED. CHARUNPHAN SAID HE COULD MAKE NO PROMISES AT THE MOMENT BUT THAT HE BELIEVED RTG WILL " DO WHAT IS NECESSARY".

4. WE WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THIS SITUATION CLOSELY, PARTICULARLY PROGRESS OF TALKS BY CAMBODIAN MISSION, AND WILL WEIGH IN AT HIGHER LEVELS AS NEEDED.
MASTERS

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